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ARBERI

Rama defends Trump's son-in-law's investment in Zvërnec after protests in Albania

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By: Radio Free Europe

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"There was an interest together with Sazani. Our position was that Sazani is public land and we are ready to work with you, but that land is not for sale, the Albanian state will be a party, a partner. For the Zvërnec project, we have made it clear that thev

must resolve it with the owners. This is the beginning," said the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, on Monday.

The Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, defended the project to build a resort in Zvërnec, near Vlora, which he described as "extraordinary".

This is Rama's first reaction after the protests against this

investment, where a citizen was also injured. The area where construction work has begun for a resort is part of a protected landscape of national and international importance. It is considered one of the most important habitats in Albania for waterfowl and migrants, including flamingos.

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The works are related to plans previously announced by Jared Kushner, son-in-law of US President Donald Trump, who in March 2024 declared his intention

intention to build hotels and hundreds of villas in the Zvërnec area.

Radio Free Europe has reached out to Kushner's company for comment regarding recent developments in Albania.

Albanian Prime Minister Rama said that the project began as interest from investors in 2023.

"There was an interest together with Sazani. Our position was that Sazani is

public land and we are ready to work with you, but that land is not for sale, the Albanian state will be a party, a partner. For the Zvërnec project, we have made it clear that they must resolve it with the owners. This is the beginning," said Rama during the meeting of the Social Party Parliamentary Group,

which
he
leads.

He
added
that
everyone
knows
who
the
stakeholders
are
for
this
project.

"The
whole
world
is
talking
about
this
project
because
of
the
man
who
promoted
it,
Jared
Kushner,
but
the
world
has
its
own
scores
to
settle
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own
wars
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fight,
so
the
project
has
also
attracted
the
interest
of
the

American and European media, but with an agenda, not to inform about Albania's development but to find 'needles in a haystack'. That is why investors have engaged world excellence, in architecture, engineering, the environment, the legal aspect, etc.," said Rama.

According to him, the Albanian Government has defended the country's interest, emphasizing that an old project was

rejected by the authorities because "we demanded high standards."

The project worth 4 billion euros

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama described the attacks on the project as political. He said that he has endured every attack because of the vision he has for Albania and that, according to him, without this vision, he does not need

the chair of power.

He said that the project in Zvërnec, worth 4 billion euros, is one of the investments that aims to place Albania on the "list of tourism champions", and therefore "there are attacks" against it.

According to him, the numerous reactions of citizens to the project come as a result of "manipulations and untruths"

about
the
investment.

Rama
said
that
five
world-
renowned
architectural
studios
have
been
engaged
by
investors
for
this
project,
as
well
as
the
best
environmental
engineers.

"You
saw
that
the
investors
came
and
that
lady....
[Ivanka
Trump]
did
not
come
for
a
vacation,
but
they
had
a
half-
day
hearing
with
professors
of
history,
geodesy,
here

in Albania who spoke about all aspects, and there a large group of people listened and took notes," said Rama, referring to the daughter of US President Donald Trump, who stayed in Albania in January of this year.

According to Rama, in March of this year, "another project, re-conceived, with a different design and development approach,

was presented, adding that the National Territorial Council, which is headed by the Albanian Prime Minister, "did not approve it as presented, but imposed conditions."

"The project will be developed only on private property registered in the state land register, the lagoon will not be affected, and the development cannot include the marina, as it was in the

two versions presented and we removed it. A project for the marina has been requested to be done later in consultation with experts, and after the project has been viewed as a whole. The American investors told me that they will do everything according to the law," Rama said.

He said there will be a buffer zone

to preserve the natural landscape, habitat quality and preserve the ecological processes of the area.

Following the May 30 protest in Zvërnec, Greece has reacted by demanding an investigation into the incident, after a protester was injured. The protester holds both Albanian and Greek citizenship.

Rama responded to Athens' claims, emphasizing that the act of violence

was by a group of private guards, not by the state, as he said has happened to Albanians in Greece.

The behavior of the security company, but also the Vlora police, "was disgusting," Rama said. He praised the actions taken by the Albanian authorities in this case.

Greece's reaction

Following the protest over the weekend, Greece

has reacted, seeking clarification from Albania, after a Greek citizen was injured.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses its strong concern about the incidents in Zvërnec, Albania, during the protest of residents for their property rights, among whom was a Greek citizen who was injured," the Greek Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

According to the Ministry

Ministry, the Greek Embassy in Tirana is making "the necessary interventions with the Albanian side", demanding a full clarification of the incident and "determination of responsibilities".

Through its response, Greece emphasizes the need to respect and protect the rights and property of members of the Greek national minority, as well as the importance of effective protection of environmentally

environmentally protected areas, in the context of the approximation of legislation with the European Union.

In its response, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs in Albania said that it regrets the situation that occurred in Zvërnec and added that the authorities of the two countries are in constant contact at various levels.

A video was published

on social media, showing an employee of a private security company hitting a protester, while two others dragged him for several meters.

Vlora police said that the protester had forced his way into the area where the works were being carried out, but images on social media showed otherwise. The Director General of the State Police, Skënder

Hita, ordered the suspension of the Vlora police director and the initiation of a disciplinary investigation into other police leaders in this district.

The Albanian Foreign Ministry said that the security company employee who used violence against a protester with Albanian and Greek citizenship has been arrested, while two other employees have been criminally prosecuted.

"Albania remains

fully committed to further strengthening relations with Greece, based on mutual respect, open dialogue and shared European values," the Albanian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The protest in Zvërnec has sparked a backlash from civil society and environmental activists. They say the works are being carried out against the public interest and are damaging a protected

area. On Sunday afternoon, a protest was held in front of the general police headquarters.

Then the citizens marched towards the Ministry of Interior and the Prime Minister's Office. The citizens demanded answers from the institutions regarding the actions of the state police and security company employees. They called for a ban on construction in protected areas.

#EDI RAMA

#PROTEST

#ZVËRNEC

#JAREDKUSHNER

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